

The shared views of the company Oslo-Stockholm 2.55 on the revision of the regulation on the union's guidelines for the development of the Trans-European transport network (TEN-T)

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Oslo-Stockholm 2.55 AB¹, which is owned by regions and larger cities along the route between Stockholm and Oslo. Today, there are major shortcomings in the infrastructure, especially the railway, between Stockholm and Oslo. Two European capitals located just over 400 kilometres apart. The train connection has a travel time of approximately five hours and a very low market share. The extensive business travel takes place mainly by air. 1.4 million airfares take place annually between Gardemoen and Arlanda airports, which is one of the busiest routes in Europe and the largest international connection from Arlanda. Only about 200,000 trips between the capitals take place by train. A faster railway connection between Oslo - Stockholm would move over a million air passengers to the train each year. A transition from air travel to rail travel is crucial to achieving the EU climate strategy by 2030 and the vision of a carbon-neutral society by 2050.

We envisage a number of strengths with coordinated planning at EU level, especially when it focuses on cross-border infrastructure and common European standards. Major efforts will be required to restructure the transport system in order to achieve our common climate goals. A better connection between Oslo – Stockholm is a major contribution to that work.

Oslo – Stockholm 2:55 supports:

1. **Achieving the target of a 90 % reduction in transport emissions by 2050.** Expansion of Oslo-Stockholm would contribute to a sharp transfer of passengers from planes to trains and greatly increase the capacity for goods by rail, which would lead to substantial climate benefits.
2. Completion of the trans-European network (core and comprehensive network) by the target years 2030 and 2050 respectively, which should also **include minor adjustments to the current definition of the transport network to include routes considered to have a strong European added value, such as the Oslo-Stockholm route.**
3. **The entire route Oslo – Stockholm should be included in the core network corridor Scandinavian Mediterranean,** which is, however, laid down in the CEF regulation, as the route has strong European added value and a clear climate benefit due to the great potential to increase the train's travel share vis-à-vis air and road transport. Today, the Värmland line has been designated as the core network in TEN-T and our position is that **the Värmland line should continue to be the core network** in the revised regulation. In addition, we see that the **Mälars line** is gaining an increasingly central national and international function and should therefore be **mentioned as a core network** within the framework of TEN-T.
4. To support the coordination, planning and **development of cross-border physical infrastructure both within the union and with third countries,** such as e.g., the Oslo-Stockholm route.
5. Clearer follow-up and reporting of the Member States' TEN-T commitments to ensure and accelerate the **completion of the core network and the comprehensive network in time.**

¹ Oslo-Stockholm 2.55 AB is owned by Region Västmanland, the City of Västerås, Region Örebro County, Örebro Municipality, Region Värmland, and Karlstad Municipality.

6. To remove physical and administrative bottlenecks in the transport network as a whole, with particular focus on **intermodal transport solutions for passengers and freight** (e.g., harmonised signalling and booking systems).
7. In-depth and joint **dialogue between regional, national and EU levels** in the further planning of the completion of the European transport network.
8. In order to provide a more accurate assessment of the socio-economic and environmental benefits of cross-border connections, the criteria for **assessing new infrastructure investments should be adapted to cover entire routes, including links with third countries**. In particular, infrastructure investments that contribute to sharply reduced greenhouse gas emissions should be rewarded.
9. The criteria for urban nodes should be adjusted to more clearly take into account the role of urban nodes as a **catchment area for the trans-European transport network in a wider geographical area around the node**, both in terms of passenger and freight traffic. The criteria should also take into account the **infrastructural function of the urban node in the system perspective**. Along the Oslo-Stockholm route several cities, including **Karlstad, Örebro and Västerås, today constitute important hubs for local, regional and national traffic and should be identified as urban nodes in TEN-T**.

Oslo-Stockholm - A connection with strong European added value

Both the political support and support from the business community have grown significantly in the past year to expand the Oslo - Stockholm section. More and more people see that a modern railway connection would both contribute to economic growth and reduced climate impact. Representatives of the Norwegian government have clearly adopted a position on investigating the possibilities of the project. In Sweden, the Swedish Transport Administration has launched a number of investigations at the same time as political support has grown sharply on both sides of the border. There is currently a unique opportunity to reach a bilateral agreement on a connection between Oslo and Stockholm.

In order to meet the climate goals, the company believes that measures with major climate gains should be prioritised. Over 85 percent of the journeys between the capitals take place by air, despite the distance being a little over 400 km, the train journey takes over five hours at its fastest. However, the prerequisites for creating a railway connection that can compete with aviation are significant. In addition to connecting the two capitals more closely, for both freight and passenger traffic, the connection will also contribute to a sharp reduction in climate impact, in line with the long-term goals of transport policy. At present, a large proportion of the regional journeys along the route take place by car, as the travel time by car is often shorter than by train, which further affects the climate, congestion on the roads and traffic safety aspects negatively.

Exports between Norway and Sweden have increased by more than 20 percent in both directions over the past ten years. In addition, service exports from Sweden to Norway have doubled and from Norway to Sweden, quadrupled in the last ten years. Norway is the country that owns most companies in Sweden. Sweden invests three times as much in Norway as in Denmark and Finland combined, and the number of employees in Norwegian-owned companies in Stockholm has doubled in ten years. To develop and facilitate communication between countries is thus of great importance. The sharp increase in service exports between Sweden and Norway is an important part of the explanation that air traffic between the countries has increased by more than four percent per year. Arlanda and Gardermoen are each other's largest foreign destinations. In 2018, the Stockholm-Oslo route was the world's twentieth most frequent flight route in the world with 12,804 flights – just after the London-Frankfurt route. This has resulted in 1.4 million air trips each year in the relationship. It is not just a lot from a Nordic perspective. It's a lot from a European perspective.

With improvements to the current infrastructure and construction of two new links, a journey time of 2 hours and 40 minutes could be achieved. With four or five stops along the way, an ordinary train with a speed of up to 250 km/h can manage a journey time of under three hours.

Travel forecasts show that if a connection with a journey time of a maximum of three hours between Oslo and Stockholm is completed in the mid 2030s, there will be 1.9 million train journeys per year and conditions will be created for almost 20 trains in each direction per day. In addition, there will be an increase in regional travel and the need for regional train traffic across the border. The connection between Oslo and Stockholm will thus be one of the Nordic region's largest travel relationships by train.

By creating closer connections between Oslo and Stockholm, the two capital regions are strengthened at the same time as the regional benefit increases between the cities on and adjacent to the route. The route passes through Sweden's most populous area where almost 3.5 million people live. Major work and study markets as well as increased housing construction and new establishments are some of the effects that the connection is expected to bring.

The potential effects of linking two of Europe's fastest growing and innovative capitals with fast, frequent and efficient train connections cannot be overstated. Consequently, the benefits of an extended railway on the route would be significant from several important perspectives as emphasised in the EU's transport policy.²

The two (three) levels – comprehensive network, core network, and corridors

With the revision of the Connected Europe Facility (CEF) and the changes in the prioritised core network corridors, which will be incorporated starting 2021, an increasing proportion of the core network coincides with the building of core network corridors. The Stockholm-Oslo route is currently only a stretch on “other parts of the core network”, but not designated as a core network corridor. The company sees a risk in the fact that “other parts of the core network” will have reduced importance as the new CEF Regulation comes into force. In the event that the number of levels in the European transport network is revised, the company wants to strongly emphasise the importance of incorporating the Stockholm-Oslo route into the core network corridor. Something which was also stated by the Swedish and the Norwegian governments in 2018, in connection with the revision of the CEF Regulation.

The company also believes that the coordinators appointed to monitor the implementation of the core network corridors have contributed to a clear and structured dialogue with the European Commission. We emphasise the importance of a continued in-depth and joint dialogue between regional, national and EU levels in the further planning of the completion of the European transport network, in particular its cross-border perspective. We therefore believe that the coordinators' mandate should clarify that it covers the entire core network, with particular focus on projects with strong European added value and substantial climate benefits.

As cross-border projects tend to be of lower priority at national level, the core network corridors play a special role in strengthening and supporting cooperation between Member States, regions, cities, ports and other players. The Oslo-Stockholm route is the only Nordic capital link not designated as a corridor. The route has previously been identified within TEN-T through the prioritised project 12 'The Nordic Triangle'. Because of the location of the metropolitan regions in central Scandinavia, the Oslo-Viken and Stockholm-Mälaren Region serve as important nodes and transport routes in the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T). Today, the Värmland Line has been designated as the core network in TEN-T and our position is that the Värmland Line should continue to be the core network in the revised regulation. In addition, we see that the Mälars line is gaining an increasingly central national and international function and should therefore be shown within the framework of TEN-T.

² <https://www.oslo-sthlm.se/>

Improved resilience of the TEN-T infrastructure

Often, the upgrading of existing infrastructure and more conventional solutions can be improved, especially with a short planning perspective. The investment needs of the trans-European transport network, TEN-T, are significant while the regular budget is limited, with yet another challenge due to the economic consequences of the corona crisis. At the same time, transport is still crucial for the functioning of the EU internal market, as has been clearly demonstrated during the current public health crisis, where closed borders have created significantly delayed delivery times. A fully developed TEN-T with appropriate cross-border links with neighbouring countries and third countries will facilitate the exchange of goods between the EU and those countries that have a positive effect on EU economy and consumers.

Future focus on the regulation

Oslo – Stockholm 2:55 emphasises that the revised TEN-T regulation should continue to have a strong focus on development of a “traditional” infrastructure, while strengthening the quality of existing infrastructure and digitisation and innovation. These three focus areas are equally important in achieving the goal of a sustainable, integrated and efficient European transport system. A revised TEN-T should aim to develop a high-performance rail network within the EU and between the EU and third countries. In addition to investments in the physical railway infrastructure, common ticket and booking systems are a prerequisite in order for international train journeys to reach their full potential.

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